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Truman Urges Candidates Avoid Foreign Policy

Foreign policy will be a major campaign issue, perhaps the chief one. But former President Truman urges all candidates to stay away from this issue because the verbal fireworks might incite our enemies and "scare the daylights" out of our friends and allies.

By HARRY S. TRUMAN

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INDEPENDENCE, Mo., Aug. 8.—There has been a growing tendency in recent Presidential elections to inject partisan party politics into the conduct of foreign affairs.

The rough and tumble game of political rivalry is hardly a proper platform from which to debate foreign policy.

There are those who tend to forget that in making impulsive statements involving our national security, they are working for a third world war—an atomic war—and I suggest that they had better stop and think before they get us into more trouble than the world is now faced with.

I have always maintained that our foreign policy should be a subject of the widest possible discussion.

This, I think, is not only desirable, but is imperative. For in a free country the people expect to be fully informed on every important aspect of our foreign operations that can prudently be revealed.

Our people have a right to know what goes on in the world, and how well we are performing.

What Critics Should Know

At the same time it should be clear, even to the zealots, that it makes no sense whatever to lump our troubles with the outside world into a charge of mismanagement against the administration. Approved For Release 2004/12/16 : CIA-RDP75-00149R000700550009-9

What these critics do not seem to understand is that they are not playing with every-day politics on the local level. They are, in fact, involving themselves and this nation in something that could be misunderstood and lead to serious complications.

To put it another way, if we attempt to hurl foreign policy into partisan politics, we will not only mislead our friends and allies, but we will probably succeed in scaring the daylights out of them before the campaigns are over.

What's more, this kind of reckless and irresponsible talk for political advantage may well incite our enemies to further mischief.

Throughout the years of my administration, I did my best to keep partisan politics out of our foreign relations. I did so because I deeply believed that the security of the United States required that the leaders of both parties in the Congress, in the Executive and among the people, must be united in meeting our obligations to the outside world.

In the new kind of world in which we live, foreign policy is an exceedingly complex and sensitive business. There are no easy answers. There are no quick solutions. It is a time for patience, understanding, thoughtful negotiation, and long-range planning.

Only the simple-minded and the ignorant are quick to offer panaceas for the world's troubles, and who are so vocal in their advice on how we are to deal with other nations.

Those who aspire to high office should think twice before they rush headlong into the foreign policy field without a full comprehension of all that is involved.

On one occasion, while I was President, I included in a public statement as follows:

"As far as I am concerned, there ought to be no Democrats and no Republicans in the field of foreign policy. We are all Americans, all citizens of the same great Republic."

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Minority Kept Informed

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On another occasion, I said:
"In foreign affairs you have a well charted course to follow. Our foreign policy has been developed and executed on



THE LATE SEN. VANDENBURG Championed Bi-Partisan Approach to Foreign Policy

a bi-partisan basis. I have done my best to strengthen and extend this practice.

"Members of both parties in and out of Congress have participated in the inner council in preparing and in actually carrying out the policies of our Government. It has been a national and not a party program.

"It will be my best purpose, as well as that of Secretary Acheson, not only to keep members of the minority currently informed, but to solicit their views and take them into serious account in both the formulation and implementation of our foreign policy."

It was the late great Sen. Arthur Vandenberg, Republican from Michigan, who so clearly and brilliantly understood the direction in which the new world was moving, and who assumed a leading role in the evolution of our postwar foreign policy. He once observed:

"During the past eight years there has been a clear disposition on the part of the Executive to work in far more intimate cooperation and liaison with his Constitutional partners in the Congress in respect to foreign policy.

"The Foreign Relations Committee, under Republican control and leadership in 1947 and 1948, during a Democratic Presidency is the further proof and final exhibit.

"Upon at least 50 occasions, many of which made history with a magnitude in its dimensions, the Committee voted 13 to 0 with a conclusiveness which permitted the Voice of America to speak for America and not for either an administration or an opposition within the Government."

Sen. Vandenberg was not unmindful of his contradictory role as a leading Republican steering a nonpartisan course in support of the Administration's foreign policy. He once expressed his dilemma in a letter before a forthcoming national election, in which he wrote in part:

"... I have a very deep interest in what I believe to be the indispensable importance of a bi-partisan foreign policy (and I think you will readily admit that I practice what I preach).

"The question in my mind is this: 'Is a bi-partisan foreign policy permanently possible?' I want to discuss it seriously after Nov. 5th I am trying to figure out whether the equally important and equally indispensable maintenance of a two-party political system does not inevitably collide with the foregoing.

"Hence, my question. 'Is bi-partisan foreign policy permanently possible?' Does this necessity irrevocably collide with our two-party political system (which is equally necessary)? ..."

Is This Policy Possible?

The answer is that it has worked and worked successfully. It is, I maintain, of the greatest importance that this bi-partisan approach to foreign policy be continued, as in the main it was during the two terms of the Republican Administration with the support of Speaker Sam Rayburn, Majority Leader Lyndon Johnson and Chairman William Fulbright.

Bi-partisan or nonpartisan foreign policy was developed by the informed leaders of both political parties, who were determined that the tragic history of partisan opposition to the League of Nations would not be repeated in the post-World War II plans for an enduring peace.

Who is to say what fate might have befallen the United Nations and the free world if we had become involved in partisan political bickering as the League of Nations became entangled? Who is to say what might have become of the United Nations and the world's hopes for peace, if we had not taken a united stand in Korea?

In foreign affairs the President who speaks for the nation is called upon to make many decisions that relate to other nations—some urgent, some critical. In that role he acts and speaks for all the people.

But, in a larger sense, the Executive's task is to anticipate developments and world trends and to plan and act accordingly.

It is not possible for the Executive always to exercise faultless judgment when anticipating events in the foreign field or when he takes steps and measures against the unclear or undisclosed intentions of an adversary.

But he should not be harassed in the exercise of that responsibility by partisan attacks. The Executive makes decisions upon the best information available to him.

This is why the CIA was set up during my administration, to collect all information gathered by the various security agencies—unedited—so that the President could make his own judgments on the facts.

There Is No Turning Back

For this nation, there is no turning back for we are on a course from which there is no returning. If we should ever be so foolish or short-sighted as to revert to isolationism and abandon the free world to the designs of their stronger neighbors, who would have a field day in overrunning them—we will inevitably risk a third world war.

The Presidency of the United States has evolved into the most demanding, responsible, and powerful office on earth. I sometimes think of it as requiring the administrative genius of a Washington, the organizational ability of a Jefferson, the great human insight of a Lincoln and the tenacity and courage of a Churchill—all in one person.

In passing, I would like to make this comment to our friends and allies everywhere:

"Do not stray from us in quest of trade or in pursuit of narrow national interests; help us keep the peace, and do not alarm yourselves about our internal stresses and strains."

"These miseries afflict us every four years when we choose a President. We invariably recover the morning after. As a free and open society we enjoy all the privileges and suffer the difficulties that go with it.

"But we are inextricably committed to freedom and to our participation in the building of a world of free men."